(c) whether he would also visit any other country in the sub-continent and if so, the details thereof; and

(d) what positive gains does Government expect out of this visit?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. The President of the United States is scheduled to visit India for five days from 20th March 2000.

(b) Both sides agree that the objective of the visit of President Clinton is to build a qualitatively new and closer relationship between the two democracies, and for the two countries to work more co-operatively in the future.

(c) The US Government has announced that the US President will make a one-day visit to Bangladesh, along with his visit to India.

(d) The visit is expected to further increase mutual understanding on political and security matters and intensify mutually beneficial co-operation in trade and investment, energy and environment, science and technology, education and culture, counter terrorism and narcotics control.

Fake passports racket in Mumbai

40. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a racket has been going on for obtaining fake passports for ISI agents in Mumbai;

(b) whether any officials of passport office are also involved in this; and

(c) if so, what action has been taken against the official involved?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) There has been one case recently where passport has been issued by the Regional Passport Office, Mumbai to an applicant who is suspected of being and ISI agent.

(b) and (c) The investigating authorities have arrested three

employees of the Regional Passport Office Mumbai. Enquiries are going on and involvement, if any, of any official can be confirmed only after completion of investigations.

Issue of Passports under Tatkal Scheme

41. SHRI KRISHAN KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Passport Offices across the country have been issued instructions to be more stringent while issuing passports on priority basis under Tatkal scheme;

(b) if so, whether under the said scheme a large number of agents of ISI got their passports and misused them;

(c) if so, the details thereof and total number of persons to whom passports under the said scheme issued during the last three years; and

(d) whether Government propose to adopt a fool proof system so that only genuine resident and Indian can only get passports?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) The Tatkal Scheme for issue of out of turn passports is only for eligible applicants who can be issued passports on post police verification basis provided such cases are certified by an officer not below the rank of Deputy Secretary to the Government of India.

(b) and (c) The Tatkal Scheme was launched on 1st January, 2000 only and no case of a passport having been issued to any ISI agent under the Tatkal Scheme has come to the notice of the government.

(d) All passports are being issued only after due police verification which *inter alia* establishes the Indian nationality of the applicant. Only short validity passports of an urgent nature can be issued on post police verification basis and on the strength of a verification certificate issued by an officer not below the rank of a Deputy Secretary to the Government of India.